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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2005
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Governor Blanco's Letter Regarding Joint Economic Task Force on Louisiana Economic Recovery

September 5, 2005

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush,

I write to ask you to work with me in developing a long term plan for the rebuilding of the Louisiana economy. I specifically ask that you join me in appointing a combined federal, state, local, private business and philanthropic council to support the economic revitalization of Louisiana in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

We should and must jointly make a commitment to rebuild infrastructure, address environmental damage, and to restore the cultural fabric of the impacted region of our state in order to re-establish Louisiana as a global leader in energy production, shipping, tourism and technology industries.

Our citizens, our most valuable asset, have been forced to take shelter across the country, but Louisiana will not fully recover until those displaced by this storm can rejoin their communities.

To accomplish the goal of rebuilding Louisiana, there are four prerequisites to an effective rebuilding effort:

Restoring and enhancing infrastructural integrity of the impacted areas. We must rebuild and enhance our communities, while at the same time preserve the cultural uniqueness of our state. First and foremost among the infrastructure improvements are the levees. Restoring and enhancing the levee system and assuring its structural safety and permanence are essential to any economic restoration. We can not expect businesses and individuals to invest in a city that could be catastrophically flooded during another hurricane. Nor can one expect that anyone will insure these kinds of investments, or make loans against them, if they cannot be secured from the risk of flooding. A major effort to secure the levee system is a precondition to any of these other goals. Federal funding would be the appropriate source for funding this endeavor.

Preserving the unique culture of Louisiana. Louisiana is unique among the 50 state in its origins, influences and traditions. People travel from across the globe to experience all that Louisiana has to offer. Generations of Americans

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have made the pilgrimage to taste the cuisine and experience the flavor of Louisiana. But most of all our sons and daughters are what really make Louisiana special. We must insure that we provide our citizens with prompt opportunity to return to their home state.

Restoring America's Wetland and committing to a thorough environmental cleanup. Long known as the Sportsman's Paradise, Louisiana has a proud tradition of environmental and conservation heritage. Environmental cleanup must be a top priority in order to enable renewed investment in tourism. A unified effort must be made between federal, state and local government agencies to restore the integrity of Louisiana's environmental image. Once again, it would seem appropriate that the majority of funding for this initiative come from federal sources.

Reestablishing Louisiana's medical services. Restoring, reinvigorating and supporting our medical community are paramount. We must continue the commitment to our people that I believe is necessary and have worked hard to achieve. I will not be deterred in my commitment to strengthening our healthcare system. We must restore the facilities, the technology and the intellectual capital to provide Louisianans with the high-quality health care they deserve.

These four goals must serve as the foundation for our state's economic recovery. In addition, we must pay special attention to four specific segments of Louisiana's economy:

Tourism

Rebuilding our tourism and related convention business will involve more than just restoring damaged assets. It will require rebuilding public trust in Louisiana. We must work to re-establish the hospitable atmosphere tourists and conventioners have traditionally found in Louisiana. An economic revitalization campaign must not only work to restore the physical assets, but also aim to restore the customs and traditions that make Louisiana special.

Energy

Energy will have its own dynamic, because the energy business generally locates where the energy assets are – in this case, the Gulf of Mexico. A major aspect of any economic recovery plan must focus on restoring and repairing the offshore and onshore assets that are so vital to this region's economy. A potential risk to the area is that the onshore assets will migrate to other locations because of the hurricane and the disruption it has caused. Any recovery program must try to prevent this because, once lost, those assets will be hard to get back.

Transportation and Ports

To restore the port and related shipping, the federal government or others must restore damaged infrastructure, both for the port itself and for the transportation mechanisms that support the port. Those would include rail, road and barge systems, as well as warehouses and other logistic assets that are essential to a functioning port. A recovery plan must address these precious assets.

Manufacturing

The underpinning of all successful economies, manufacturing serves to produce a wide variety of consumables whether for the military, government, or private citizens. Manufacturing provides quality, good-paying jobs for our

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people, as well as the stability drives growth in other industries. Louisiana has a proud manufacturing history, and it is important that it maintain its place in our economy in the future.

Technology

In addition to the specific sectors mentioned above, a vibrant and healthy business community requires technological investment and innovation. We must maintain a healthy traditional service economy, encourage strong financial institutions and support the service companies that provide the economic foundation for our state. It is integral that we remain at the forefront of innovation by cultivating emerging technologies such as nanotechnology and biotechnology, and fostering the efficient and effective use of information technology to best serve the citizens of Louisiana. An example of this is Louisiana's burgeoning film and digital media industry.

Mr. President, I ask that this issue be treated as a national priority and ask you to work with me to appoint a council to oversee these efforts. I thank you again for your commitment to the people of Louisiana during our time of need, and will continue to work tirelessly alongside you to respond in the wake of this disaster.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Babineaux Blanco
Governor
State of Louisiana